




# How Common Is Procrastination?

A STUDY BY DARIUS FOROUX



“You cannot escape the  
responsibility of tomorrow  
by evading it today.”

— ABRAHAM LINCOLN





# About This Study

We all know that procrastination is not helpful behavior. But how many of us actually procrastinate?

The purpose of this study is to simply establish what amount of the workforce admits to procrastinating on an average day. Until now, I haven't found a study of this size that gives us better answers. The survey consisted of two questions.

1. How many hours did you procrastinate yesterday?
2. What describes your situation best?

2,219 people responded.

This study is not about finding out exactly how much people procrastinate. That's hard to measure. Instead, it's easier to measure whether someone procrastinated or not.

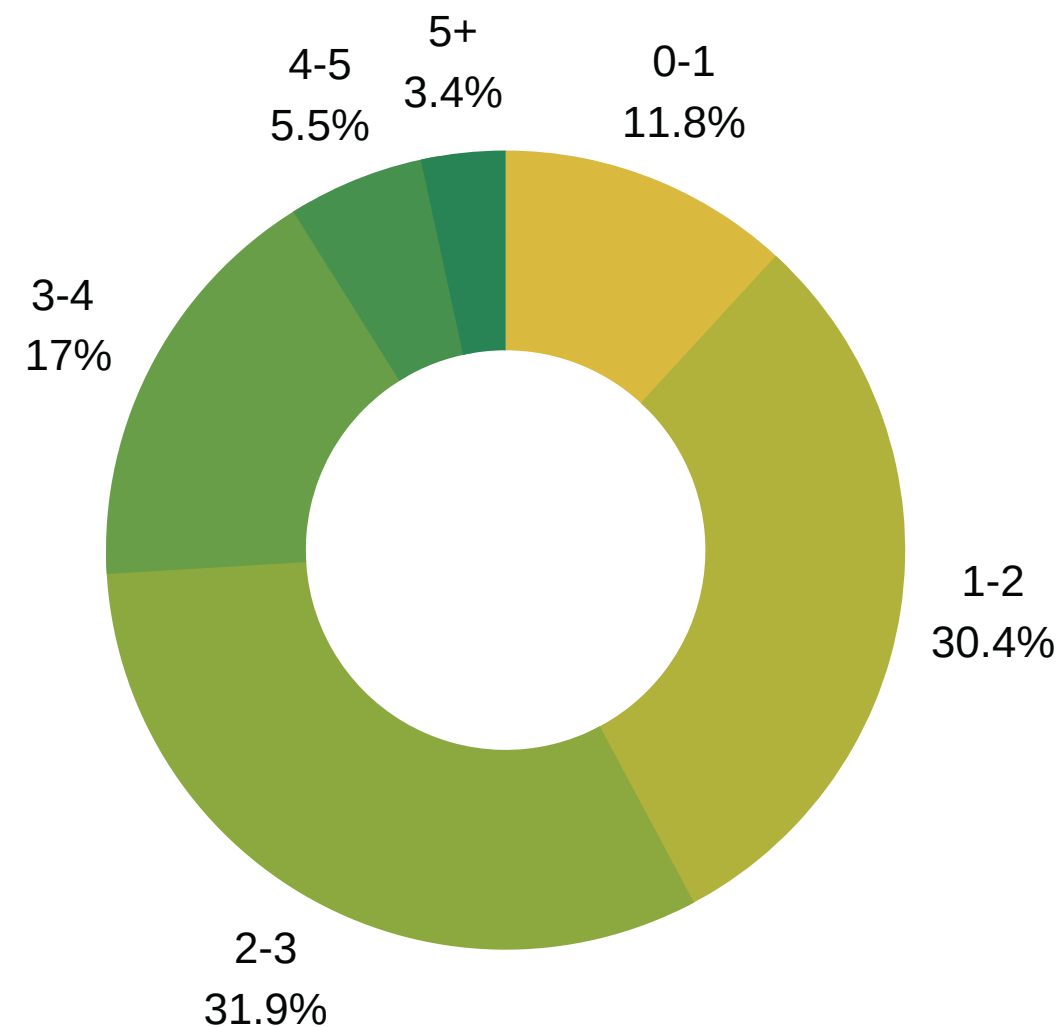
What you did yesterday is a good representation of how you spend most of your time. Less than one hour of procrastination is considered the same thing as 0. Why? Simply because we're human—not computers.



88%

OF THE WORKFORCE ADMITTED  
THEY PROCRASTINATED AT LEAST  
ONE HOUR

# How many hours did you procrastinate yesterday?



If yesterday wasn't a business day, think about the last business day (Mon-Fri).

0-1: I didn't procrastinate. I did everything I set out to do. When I got my important things done, I did some relaxing.

1-2: I put off some work. But it's fine. I still got a lot out of my day.

2-3: I wasted some time on useless activities. But at least I still did my work. However, I didn't work out, read a book, or worked on my personal goals.

3-4: I gave into a lot of distractions. It was "meh."

4-5: I did a bit of busy work, went to meetings, drank a bunch coffee, and chatted with a few friends.

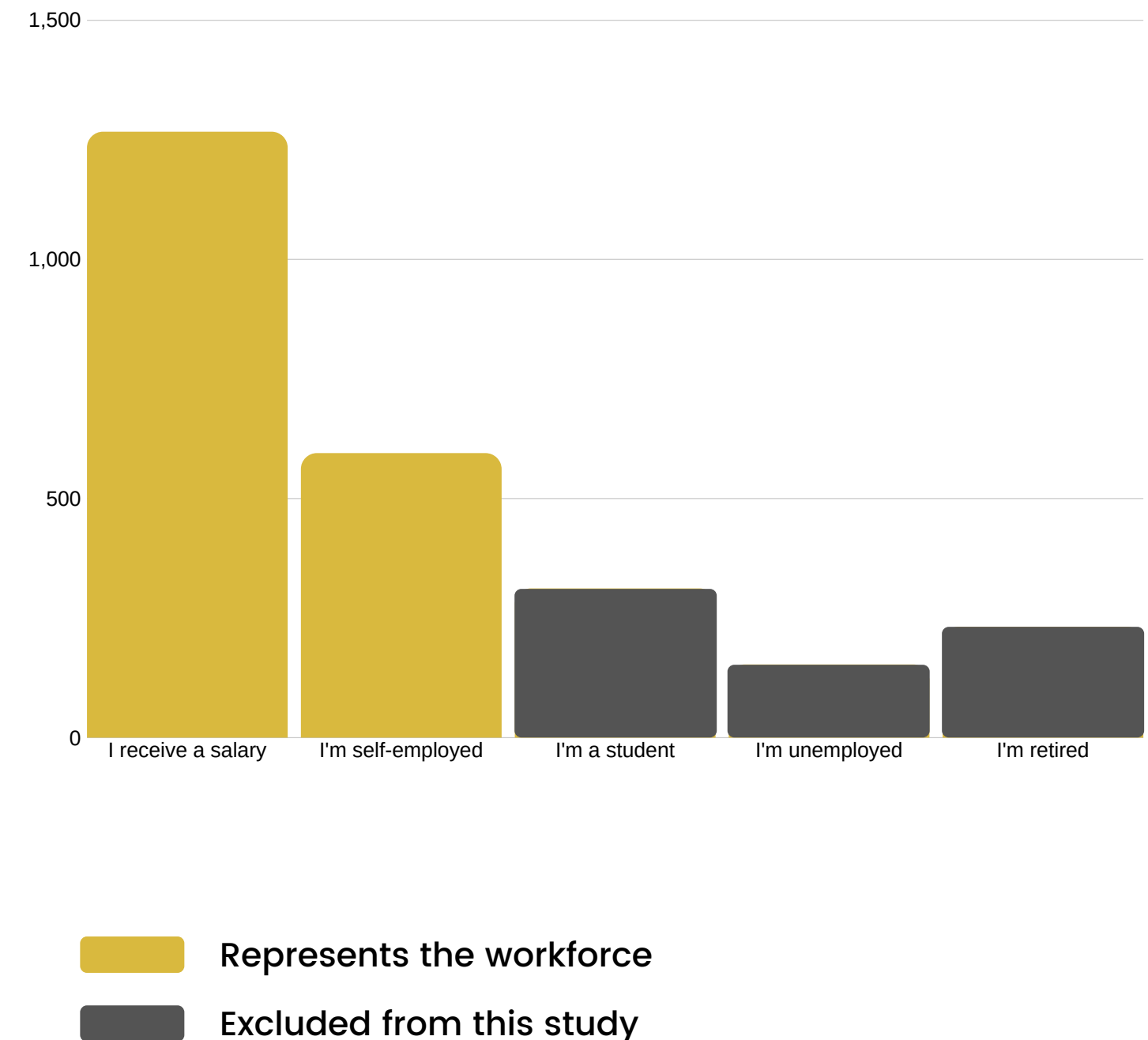
5+: I didn't do anything useful.

n = 2,219

# What describes your situation best?

For this study, I've used the Cambridge definition of the workforce: "The group of people who work in a company, industry, country, etc." That does not include unemployed people, students and retirees who do not work.

Multiple answers were possible. If a person is retired but still works, I consider them a part of the workforce. A student with a side job is also considered a part of the workforce.



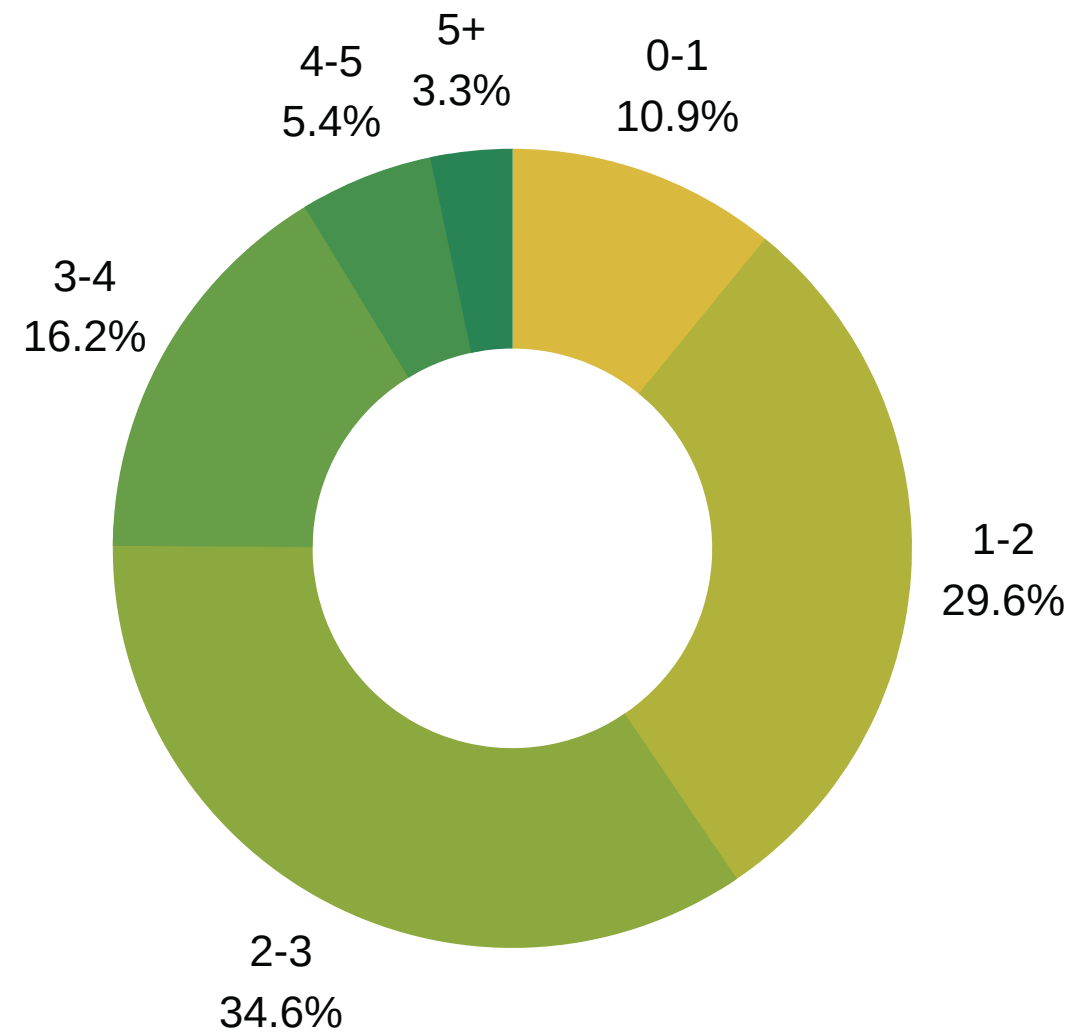


**80%**

OF SALARIED  
WORKERS  
PROCRASTINATED  
BETWEEN 1-4 HOURS

**76%**

OF ENTREPRENEURS  
PROCRASTINATED  
BETWEEN 1-4 HOURS



## What salaried workers answered

The biggest group procrastinated between 1-4 hours. Combined, this group represents 80.4% of all salaried workers. I call this group the "casual procrastinators."

They wasted between 12.5% and 50% of their workday.

8.7% of salaried workers are "hardcore procrastinators" that wasted at least half of their work day.

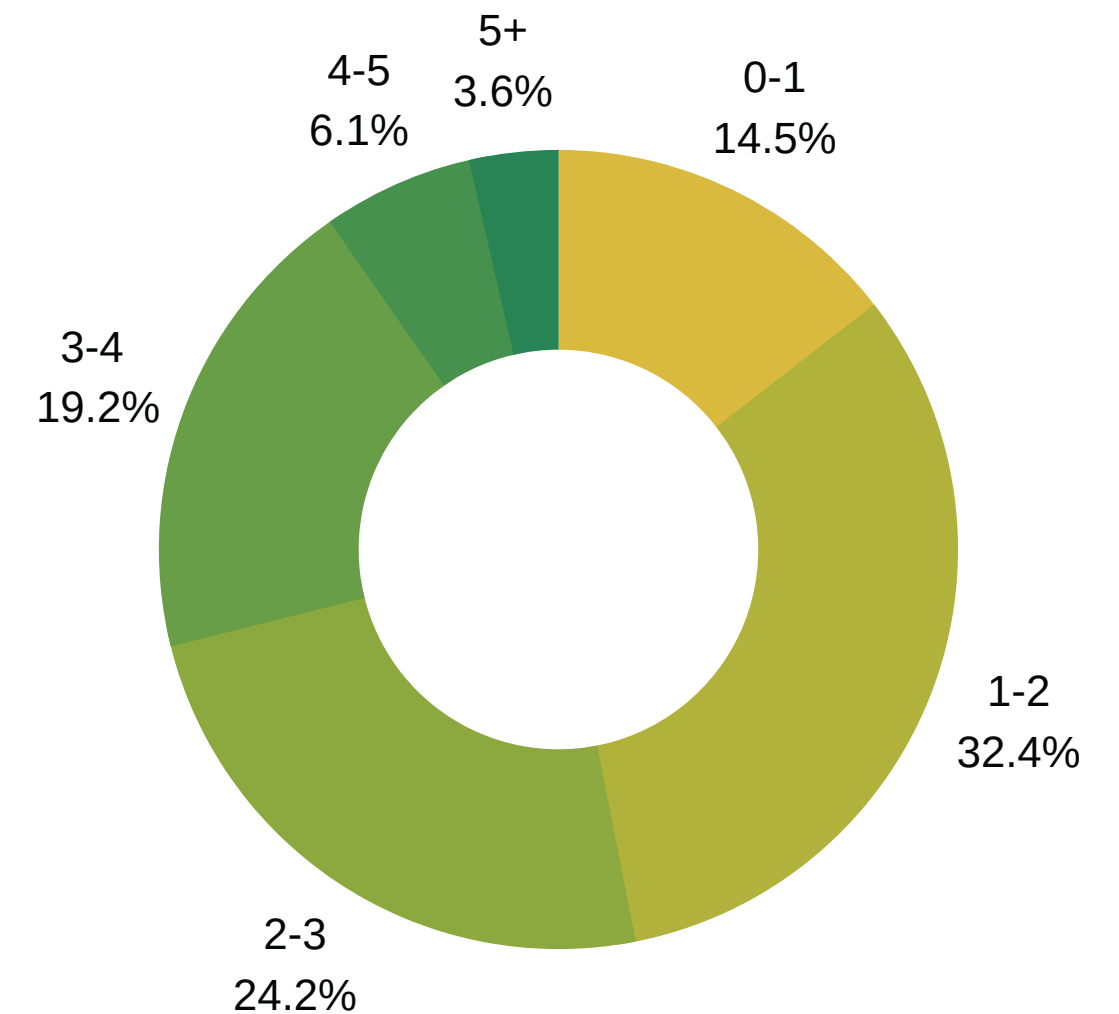


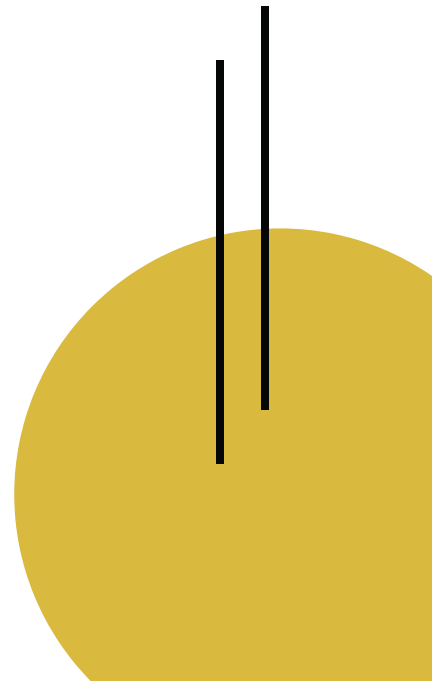
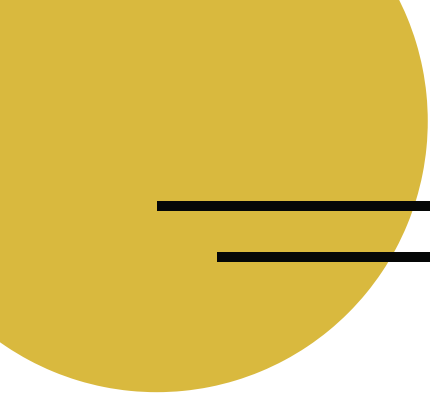
# What **entrepreneurs** answered

There are more non-procrastinators among entrepreneurs, compared to salaried workers. 14.5% of the self-employed persons didn't procrastinate.

75.8% of entrepreneurs procrastinated between 1-4 hours (casual procrastinators).

9.7% of entrepreneurs were "hardcore procrastinators" that wasted 4 hours or more.

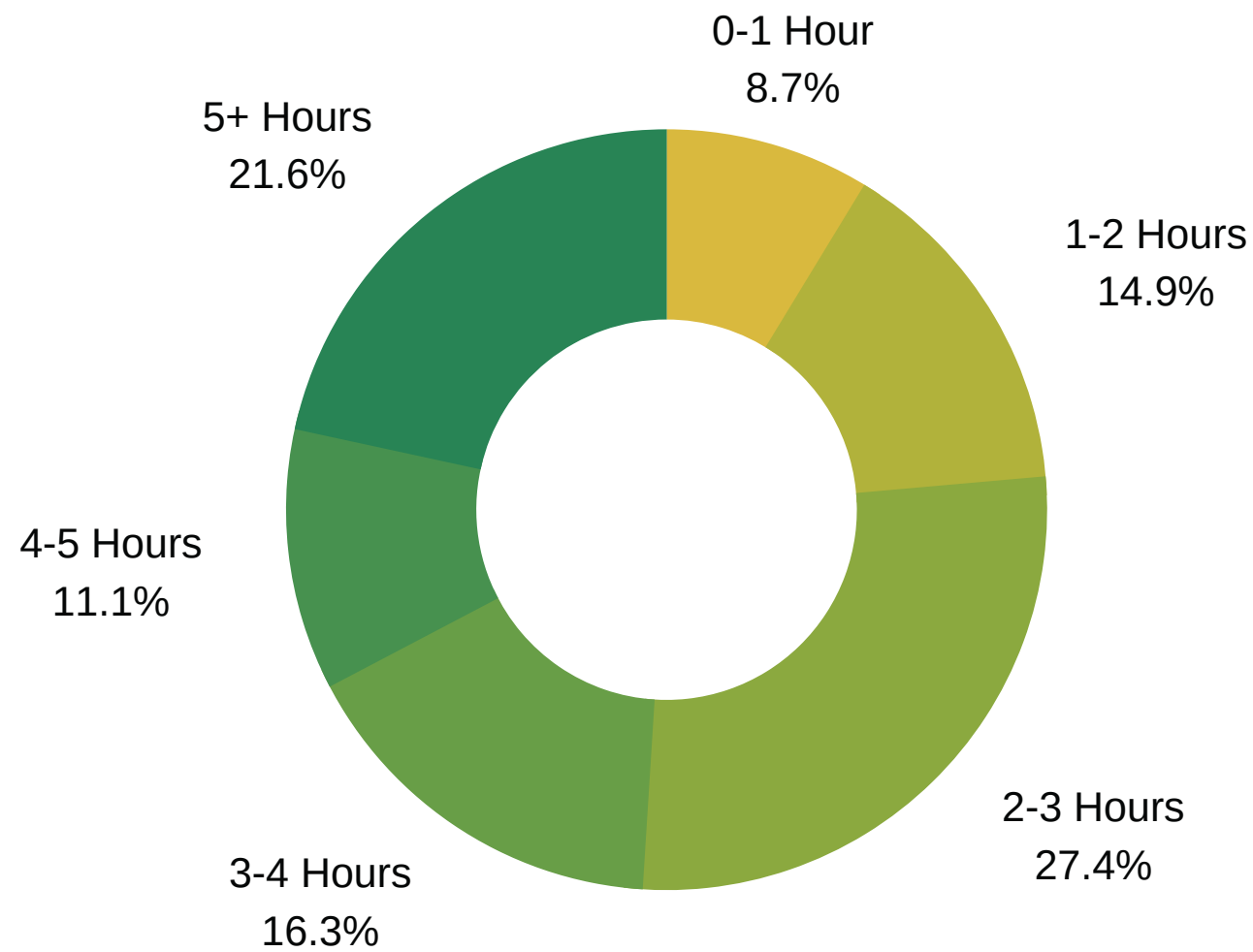




# What **students** answered

Even though students are not a part of the workforce, I decided to report their findings. After all, students are notorious for their procrastination. Apparently, it's true. Only 8.7% of students admitted they didn't procrastinate.

The group that procrastinated more than 4 hours was also bigger than the workforce (32.7%).





# Conclusion

With 88% of the workforce procrastinating, we have room for improvement. If a person procrastinates 3 hours a day, that's 37.5% of an 8 hour workday. **With a salary of \$40K, that's \$15,000 of lost productivity.**

I realize that's an extreme simplification. And yet, the reality is worse. Procrastination rubs off. If one person procrastinates, an entire team is more likely to do it too. For companies, wasting time has always been a problem.

For entrepreneurs, the stakes are even higher. Wasting time now has consequences for tomorrow.

It means that you have to work harder tomorrow to keep up. The platitude, "slow and steady wins the race" is something that most professionals ignore.

It's a simple and effective strategy that helps people to achieve **consistent results**. And consistency is the way to beat procrastination.

# \$15,000

Is how much a person that earns \$40K a year wastes by procrastinating 3 hours per day

(37.5% of their working hours)

# About The Author

I started studying procrastination in 2009, when I started my master's degree in Business Administration. I didn't understand why I kept putting off important work. That's when my interest in overcoming procrastination started.

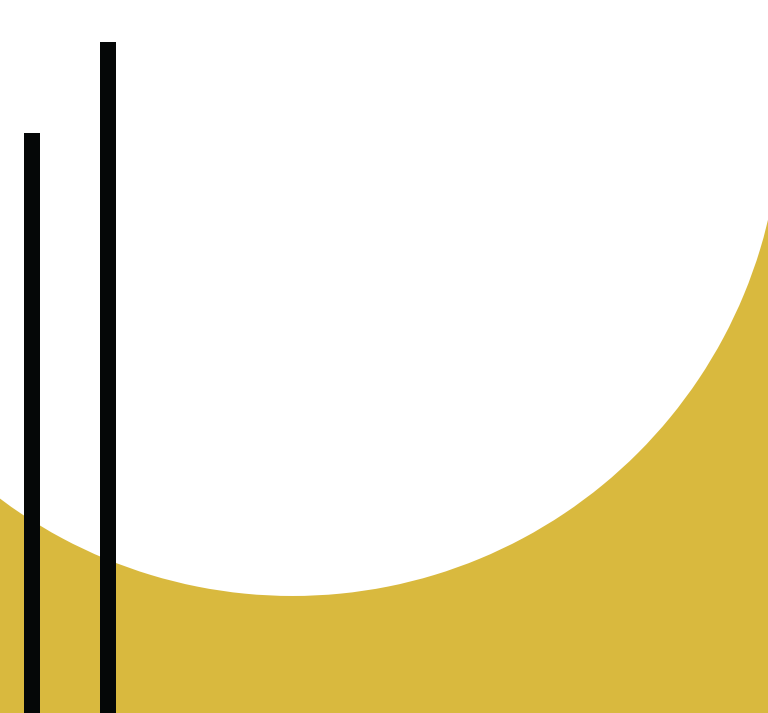
Since 2015, I've been sharing my tips about improving productivity and overcoming procrastination on my blog, [www.dariusforoux.com](http://www.dariusforoux.com). Over 500,000 people read my articles on the internet. I'm also the author of 6 books, and creator of 4 online courses.

You can use this study and document any way you want. There is no copyright. If you want to refer to the study, I'm asking a link back to my site:  
<http://dariusforoux.com/procrastination-study/>.

If you want to access the raw dataset, you can download it on the above webpage. If you have any questions, get in touch through my site. Thanks for reading.



DARIUS FOROUX



**“Nothing is so fatiguing  
as the eternal hanging  
on of an uncompleted  
task.”**

– WILLIAM JAMES





# Notes

**A few notes on the scale.** The answers are in one hour increments for a reason. I didn't ask for a specific number as in "How many minutes did you procrastinate yesterday" because it's nearly impossible to give an accurate answer. Asking someone a question that's impossible to answer only gives you bad outcomes. I've been researching procrastination for a decade, regularly keep an activity log, and teach a class on it. And yet, I can't give you the exact amount of minutes I procrastinated. However, I can give you a ballpark figure (a rough estimate).

Yesterday, a Tuesday, I procrastinated less than 60 minutes. It was more close to 30 minutes but I can't recall exactly because my activity log might have errors. I do know that it wasn't in the 1-2 hours range. Still, everybody procrastinates a bit. It's not realistic to say you never procrastinate.

For example, every morning, I read some sports news and find myself reading just a bit too much or watching too many highlights. That's time I should be working. But I still consider that zero procrastination because I often catch myself doing it and get on with my day. At the end of the day, I feel like I did important work.

That's what matters. Did you make progress? Or did you block yourself? Now, I'm not perfect, and some days I screw up. But that's not a problem. The average is what counts. If you procrastinate heavily one or two days of the month, and don't procrastinate the rest of your time, your life will be great. You will probably achieve a lot more than someone who procrastinates 2-3 hours a day. Every day.

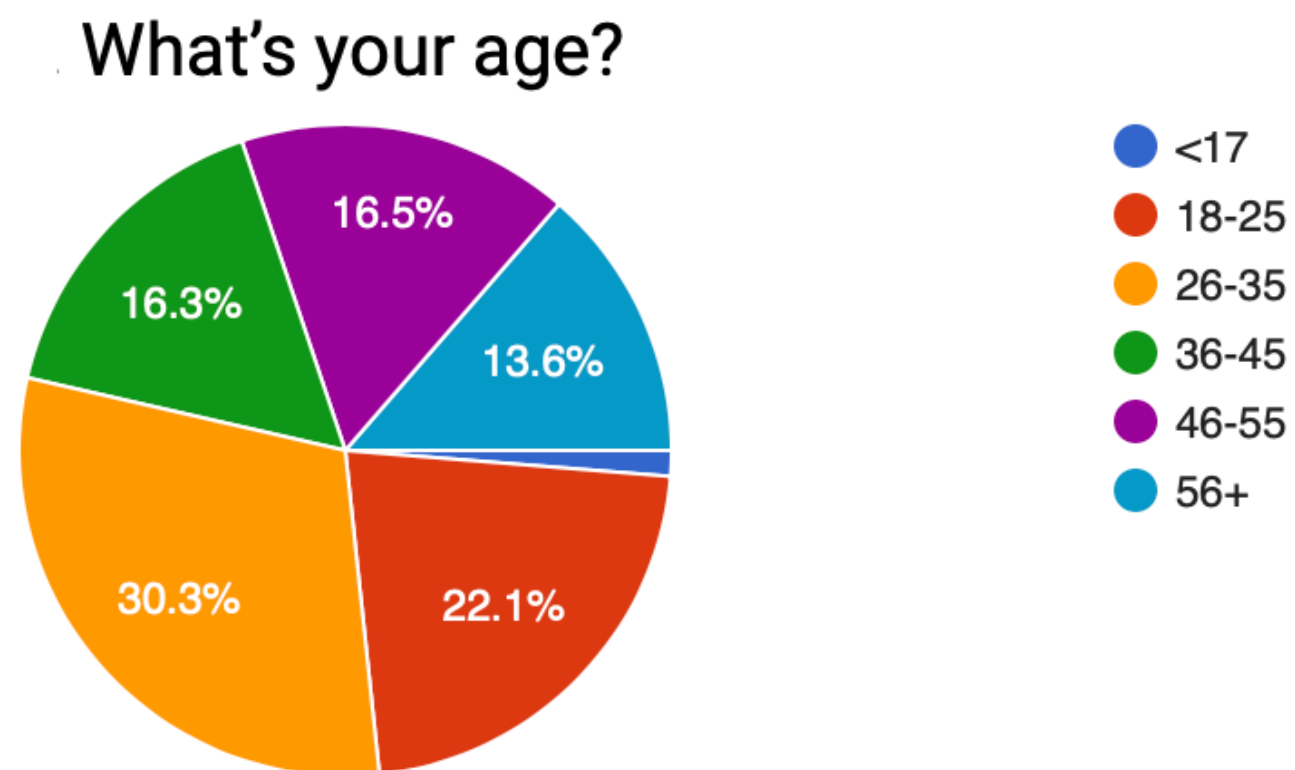
**Note on odd responses.** I've deleted people who didn't take the survey seriously. There was one person who ticked all the boxes on the second question. There was also one person who was a student, self-employed, and retired. That might be true, but it's highly unlikely. Another person received a salary and was unemployed—which is also not normal. To be sure, I've deleted these odd responses so that the results reflect reality.

**Final note.** Studies are not perfect because humans are not perfect. Even though we have good intentions, we're all subject to cognitive biases, including myself. The biggest challenge is that we might over- or under-estimate the amount of time we procrastinate. So take these numbers as estimates, not definite answers.

# Notes

Notes about the audience. I generally do two to three surveys a year. This time, I didn't ask about demographics because I only had one purpose for this survey: To get the largest number of participants. The shorter the survey, the better.

But, I've asked about demographics last year. My audience hasn't changed much over that time. Last time, 51% were women, 49% were men. The age distribution is as follows:



It's a good reflection of the working population. But I don't think demographics matter. Too often, scientists try to explain everything by looking at someone's sex, age or degrees. What's more important than age and sex is that my audience is more driven than the average professional.

Why? Simply because they are interested in personal development. A person without any ambition or goals will not read a self-improvement blog. Hence, we can say that we're looking at a group of people who are already more driven than the average knowledge worker. That's something to keep in mind.

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